

Indiana House of Representatives

News and Information

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CROOKS LEADS HOUSE IN HONORING STATE CHAMP HATCHETS, COACH OMER, MR. BASKETBALL ZELLER

INDIANAPOLIS – Washington High School's state championship boys basketball team was recognized today by members of the Indiana House, with State Rep. Dave Crooks (D-Washington), the voice of the Hatchets, leading a celebration that also honored Coach Dave Omer and Indiana's 2005 Mr. Basketball Luke Zeller.

During a ceremony on the House floor today, representatives approved three resolutions recognizing the team, its coach and the star player, who sank a half-court shot at the buzzer to lead Washington to a 74-72 overtime win over Plymouth in the Class 3A state basketball championship game at Conseco Fieldhouse on March 26.

"What Coach Dave Omer, Luke Zeller and the rest of the Hatchets were able to accomplish already has joined the ranks of Hoosier basketball lore next to Bobby Plump and Damon Bailey," Crooks said. "It could not happen to a nicer team, school or community, and I am honored to be able to see them come to the Statehouse to receive the recognition they have earned."

Crooks first recognized team members Kyle Price, Kevin Decker, Brett Matteson, Bart Young, Joel McDonald, David Brashear, Jordan Winkler, Justin Smith, Ross Wade, Isaac Stoll, Tyler Zeller, Bryan Bouchie and Zeller, along with Omer, assistant coaches Tony Barnard, Alan Bubalo, Les Wilson and Kyle Cornelius, Washington High School Principal Gary Puckett and Superintendent Tom Miller.

"Washington has a fine tradition of basketball excellence, and this fine team takes its place in that roll of honor," Crooks said. "The accomplishments of the Washington Hatchets of 2004-05 are truly what Indiana legends are made of, and this legend will live on for a long time in the hearts of all who hold Hoosier Hysteria dear."

In paying tribute to Zeller, who will attend the University of Notre Dame in the fall, Crooks said the young man's excellence went far beyond his achievements on the basketball court.

"Luke is an All-American scholar who ranks first in his class of 175 with a 4.0 grade point average," Crooks said. "He makes time for his community by volunteering for Habitat for Humanity and Camp Illiana, participating in the Dr. Seuss 'Read Across America' initiative in area elementary schools, and acting as a leader and teacher for teenage Bible study. He is also a member of the Shepherd Lutheran Church and the Fellowship of Christian Athletes.

"Luke Zeller is an outstanding role model for the young people of Indiana," Crooks added. "He has shown that an athlete can excel on the athletic field and in the classroom and community."

Omer, who won the state title in his final game as coach before retiring, was recognized for a 40-year career that included 470 wins.

"There are very few coaches who are able to retire at the top of their games, and Dave Omer is a most fitting addition to those ranks," Crooks said. "There are so many young men whose lives have been changed for the better, thanks to Dave and his lovely wife Wilda, and we can only wish them the best in the years to come."

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